

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On September 9, 2023, Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties experienced historic rainfall resulting in flash flooding that took the lives of two Pennsylvanians, caused multiple injuries, and created significant destruction across the three counties. In response to the devastating flooding, Governor Josh Shapiro has requested that you declare a major disaster, authorize Individual Assistance for Lackawanna County, and authorize Public Assistance for Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties. We support Governor Shapiro's request and ask that you act expeditiously to provide federal aid to the Commonwealth.

Under the Stafford Act, only the President has the authority to approve a request from a governor for a major disaster declaration, an action which unlocks targeted federal resources to support recovery efforts. These additional resources are designed to accelerate recovery and ensure that communities can move forward. While Governor Shapiro and his administration have worked diligently to support recovery efforts, the Commonwealth has already had a difficult year in terms of damages sustained in extreme weather events, including the severe storm and flooding that devastated communities in Berks, Bucks, and Northampton Counties in July. To ensure that damages from the September storm and flooding in Northeastern Pennsylvania are properly and swiftly addressed, as well as to help the Commonwealth maintain sufficient resources for any unexpected future events, it is critical that federal assistance be made available to the Commonwealth.

In the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) completed for the three affected counties, it was determined that 459 Pennsylvania residences had storm- or flood-related damages, and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency estimates that damages exceed \$25.3 million. We have heard from leaders in Pennsylvania about the need for federal assistance to respond to these damages. For instance, until early 2022 the City of Scranton was listed as a financially distressed municipality by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Without Public Assistance to respond to its costly damages, estimated to be several millions of dollars, the City could experience financial setbacks and increased burdens to taxpayers that risk slowing the momentum that the City has built over the past several years. In Newton Township, not far from Scranton, a bridge used by over 150 students to get to school each day and traveled by over 2,000 vehicles daily collapsed while three school buildings in the Abington Heights School District flooded. These examples are just a sampling of the severe damage to critical infrastructure that resulted from the storm and flooding. Federal assistance has the potential to

make a significant difference in communities like these looking to rebuild and recover, and it is crucial that the federal government support the Commonwealth as it seeks to keep its residents safe and stable during this difficult time.

We urge you to approve Governor Shapiro's current major disaster declaration request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress